

Do You See What I See?

Grade level K–2

Curricular Connections

English Language Arts / Visual Arts

Artist

Joseph Wheelwright
(American, 1948)
Works in Boston, MA.

Artwork

Listening Stone, 1995, granite, 40" x 44" x 60," Museum Purchase with partial funding provided by Betty Jane and Stephen Andrus.



Joseph Wheelwright is a master carver who works in stone, wood, and bone to create fantastic figures and creatures. Wheelwright's sculptures exist in a range of scales from the tiny to the monumental, often referencing the natural world through the artist's choice of materials and particular anatomical distortions. *Listening Stone* was created specifically for deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum. Wheelwright chose a giant boulder from a recent excavation on deCordova's grounds, and transformed it into a disembodied abstracted head at his studio. After completing the work, the sculpture was positioned so as to relate in site, size, and material to nearby rock outcroppings. In this way, *Listening Stone* seems to have emerged spontaneously from the ground, suggesting a mythic being or nature spirit in communion with the earth.

Goals:

1. Students will learn to carefully view and describe the sculpture.
2. Students will exercise creative thinking and writing skills by assuming the perspective of the sculpture and writing a poem about the piece.

Vocabulary

- **Site-specific:** Artwork created for a specific location.
- **Senses:** Functions of the body, such as touch, smell, taste and sight.
- **Poem:** A piece of writing which expresses thoughts or feelings.

Looking Questions

- What do you see?
- How does this sculpture seem realistic? How does it not?
- What material is this sculpture made out of? Where could you find this material?
- What do you think the artist did first in making this sculpture?
- Imagine what it would be like to carve stone. How might it be different to carve wood?

Discussion Questions

- How would *Listening Stone* change if it were the size of a pebble rather than a boulder? How important is size to this sculpture?
- How do you think this 6,000 pound sculpture was moved into place in the Sculpture Park?
- Why do you think the artist created *Listening Stone*?
- What would you tell the *Listening Stone*?
- The title suggests that *Listening Stone* is listening, but what else do you think *Listening Stone* is doing?

Activity: Poetic Interpretation

- Students will write and illustrate a poem as an interpretation of *Listening Stone*.

Materials

- Colored pencils and/or crayons
- Drawing paper
- Writing paper
- Pencils

Word Bank:

- Rough
- Bumpy
- Grainy
- Hard
- Soft
- Wet
- Dry
- Dirt
- Grass
- Lonely
- Bark
- Big
- Huge
- Small
- Sad
- Happy
- Branch
- Tree
- Woof
- Chirp

- Blue
- Green
- Hot
- Cold
- Look
- Listen

Directions

- As a class the students will respond to the following questions, imagining their answers from the perspective of *Listening Stone*. The teacher will record choice vocabulary in a word bank.
 1. What might *Listening Stone* see?
 2. What might *Listening Stone* hear?
 3. What might *Listening Stone* say?
 4. What might *Listening Stone* think or feel?
- Individually, each student will write a poem focused on one of the four questions, using nouns, verbs, adjectives, and sensory words to describe details. Students may use the word bank as a jumping off point.
- Individually, each student will illustrate their poem with colored pencils and/or crayons.
- Students will divide into four groups, one group for each of the four questions. Each student will share their poem and illustration with the group. Students may then share their poem with the entire class.

Reflection Questions

- How did imagining the senses of the *Listening Stone* make the sculpture come alive in your mind?
- If you were an artist carving a giant boulder what would you carve? How would you title your work?

Resources

Picture Books

My Five Senses, Alike, HarperCollins Children's Books, 1991. ISBN:006445083X

You Can't Smell a Flower with your Ear!: All About Your Five Senses, Beverly Collins, Mavis Smith, Grosset & Dunlap, 1994. ISBN: 0448404699

Websites

Joseph Wheelwright

<http://www.joewheelwright.com/>

Extensions

- **Science:** Imagine you are a team of scientists who are called in to investigate *Listening Stone*. Plan a scientific investigation asking questions, recommending tools needed to gather evidence, and communicating a reasonable explanation.
 - Standard: Science as Inquiry A1: Abilities necessary to do scientific inquiry.

- **Social Studies:** The granite boulder used to sculpt *Listening Stone* was unearthed in deCordova's parking lot. List examples of the natural resources common to your region.
 - Standard III: People, Places, and Environments.

- **Math:** Discuss the sculptural process terms "subtractive" and "additive." Create addition and subtraction math problems based on artists carving and building sculpture.
 - Standard: Number and Operations: Compute fluently and make reasonable estimates.